

The Seven Laws of the Harvest: Understanding the Realities of Sowing and Reaping. By John W. Lawrence. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995 (original copyright, 1975). 130 pp. Paper, \$7.99

In his classic work, *The Seven Laws of the Harvest*, John Lawrence responds to why the lives of many Christians are so ineffective. His thesis is simple and straightforward: Most Christians do not understand God's spiritual laws, which depict the realities of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7-8).

Throughout his book, Lawrence builds a strong case for God's discipline now in time. This is an element of reaping that many scholars and pastors too quickly pass over. Not Lawrence. He cites several cases of divine discipline in time throughout the Scriptures (e.g. Lot, Jacob, Israel, and David). He also includes numerous amusing--and not so amusing--anecdotes and illustrations, which powerfully drive home his point.

The seven chapters are devoted to defining and applying these seven laws: (1) *Considering: We reap much that we did not sow.* The first law focuses on the goodness of God. Whatever follows, it is important to recognize that the Lord has blessed us with His Son and His Word. (2) *Identifying: We reap the same in kind as we sow.* This chapter speaks to the effect of our sin upon our children. Since everything reproduces after its kind, God will never be mocked. Confession and forgiveness in no way stop the harvest (p. 39). (3) *Waiting: We reap in a different season than when we sow.* Lawrence clearly states, "The harvest never comes immediately" (p. 48), yet it will come. Whether saved or unsaved, we will all reap what we sow. This chapter closes with "Dying Statements of the Unsaved" (pp. 54-57) and "Dying Statements of the Saved" (pp. 57-59). (4) *Remembering: We reap more than we sow.* The lives of Jacob and David serve to remind us that there are grave consequences for our sinful actions (pp. 62-71). Two Old Testament verses are bolstered to validate this principle: Proverbs 22:8 and Hosea 8:7. (5) *Doing: We reap in proportion as we sow.* This chapter is a sermon on spiritual stewardship. Although the thrust of the chapter is financial stewardship, there are principles for every other area of our lives. (6) *Persevering: We reap the full harvest of the good only if we persevere; the evil comes to harvest on its own.* Lawrence writes, "The problem of the average believer today is not a lack of knowledge, but the application of truths he already knows" (p. 85). Stories from the lives of Paul and David are used to urge

us to persevere by waiting on the Lord, dealing well with trials and discouragement, reading the Word, and living one day at a time. (7) *Forgetting: We cannot do anything about last year's harvest, but we can about this year's*. In this final chapter, Lawrence utilizes several rewards passages (John 15:5; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 9:24-27; Heb. 6:1-8) to motivate his readers to make up for lost time and press on to maturity. His key for growth and maturity is a simple equation: "Discipline produces character which produces fruitfulness" (p. 117).

From cover to cover, this is an excellent book. It is concise, practical, and witty. Many Christians will appreciate much of Lawrence's theology evidenced in statements like these: "So the Father gives salvation to all who do nothing more than to believe in His Son. . . We either believe the witness God has given concerning His Son that salvation is only through Him or we are still trying to be saved by and through our own deeds of righteousness" (pp. 20-21). Especially noteworthy, is the concluding chapter where Lawrence unveils his understanding of Hebrews 5:11-6:8 (pp. 104-120). In this section, he insists that the recipients of Hebrews are Jewish Christians in need of "going on to maturity" (p. 106). Lawrence understands the consequences of not pressing on to maturity to be the loss of rewards at the judgment seat of Christ (p. 111).

This book will continue to stand the test of time. More importantly, John Lawrence's life will stand the test of time and eternity. Having had the privilege of calling Professor Lawrence a friend during the last six years of his life, I can honestly say that this book is a reflection of his life and theology. He lived a life of grace and finished well. He is now with the Lord and already reaping the blessings of a life devoted to teaching and practicing the Word of God.